

Flathead County Weed/Parks/Recreation

MINUTES

Meeting of the Board of Directors

Meeting Date: November 4, 2019

Members of the Board in attendance:

Jim Buechle, Clyde Fisher, Jessica Treweek, Pete Woll, Lori Moran

Members of the Board not in attendance:

none

Also in attendance:

Jed Fisher, Superintendent; Gordon Jewett, Assistant Superintendent; Haily Hoff, Clerk

Others Present:

Gabe Dillon – Foy's to Blacktail Trails

Call to Order

A meeting of the Board of Directors for Flathead County Weed, Parks & Recreation was held in the conference room at 311 FFA Drive, Kalispell, Montana, on November 4, 2019. The meeting convened at 8:30 AM, President Woll presiding.

Approval of Minutes

Minutes for the October 7, 2019, meeting of the Flathead County Weed, Parks & Recreation Board of Directors were distributed to the members of the Board.

Jim Buechle moved to approve the October 7, 2019 Board minutes.

Jessica Treweek seconded the motion.

There being no discussion and all in favor – the motion was carried.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Parks & Recreation Department Report

Superintendent Fisher informed the board that Derek Ford is interested in the possibility of pouring an ice rink at Lake Hills Park in Bigfork. Parking could be problematic depending on the volume of use but bears looking into. Mr. Fisher will follow up with him to see how he wants to proceed.

Martin City Park is in the midst of septic system failure issue. In the 1970's, the Environmental Health Department issued neighboring residents easement permits for a drain field to the ball field area of the park. Martin City has no public water system and those agreements are still valid. Kate Cassidy of Environmental Health ran a dye test and located the source of the problem. The renters in that residence have been difficult to reach. This drain field will remain in the park after the septic systems is repaired.

The plans for the real estate office building within the site expansion of Volunteer Park have been changed at the Commissioner level. Initially Jed was directed from the Commissioners office to inform Bruce Ennis that repurposing that building for a library would be an inappropriate use of the space. Mike Pence and Randy Brodehl met with the board members of the West Shore Community Library on October 11, 2019. The Parks Department learned of this meeting after it had taken place. Pence and Brodehl were impressed by the WSCL Board's volunteerism and financial support in the Lakeside Community. After returning to the Courthouse following that meeting, Mike Pence and Randy Brodehl shared the information with Pam Holmquist and Phil Mitchell. They too, were impressed in learning what was reported and all three Commissioners are open to hearing from Bruce and Maggie about a proposal regarding this potential change to their preliminary plan. Jim Buechle voiced his concerns about maintenance of this building going forward. Jessica Treweek asked what their role is as a board in matters such as these. They thought it unusual to be left out of the conversation entirely. Mrs. Treweek would like to have a conversation with Commissioners about the purpose and responsibilities of the Weed/Parks Board.

- **Foy's to Blacktail Trails Report – Gabe Dillon**

Gabe Dillon handed out a brochure on the Foy's Community Forest. Foy's To Blacktail Trails has created a self-guided walking tour of the Nature Loop and Family Trail. This educational tour is being utilized by elementary schools and Journey to Wellness participants through the Summit. All of the picnic tables have been stained. Flathead County Parks supplied the stain and Foy's to Blacktail Trails supplied the labor. This was an ongoing project and the tables took a lot of stain. The Trails Day in October held approximately 50 volunteers. Participants helped install the Glacier interpretive sign on the Notch Trail and pulled a truck load of spotted knapweed, houndstongue and Canada thistle. Kiosk and boundary trail signage has been updated. Park users will now see signs directing them toward the pavilion instead of the meadow. Approximately 220 volunteer hours of labor were recorded through Foy's to Blacktail Trails this year worth about \$4,400 of labor. Mr. Dillon will update Jed and Gordie over the winter on any potential projects in the future.

- **Herron Park commercial bike tours use request – Kurt Schram**

Jed received a special use permit from Kurt Schram with Whitefish Trail Shuttle, LLC. Mr. Schram is interested in providing guided mountain biking tours through the Foy's To Blacktail Trail system for small groups throughout the season. Commercial use in parks has typically been denied in past years. Jed will follow up with Kurt Schram on proposed dates.

Weed Department Report

Gordon Jewett reported that the weather has brought spraying operations to halt for the season. Revegetation work is ongoing in needed areas of the rights-of-way. Minimal mowing remains to be done and seasonal layoffs will continue through November.

Other Business

Jed Fisher informed the Board that Amanda and Sadie are doing an excellent in managing recreation programs. There was a participant in men's league basketball that had to be suspended for one year due to repeated behavior issues.

Pete Woll reported that the first coordinated project between the Flathead County Weed District and the Flathead Conservation District was a success. The weed workshop put on by Hailey Graf and Noel Jinings served 55 landowners; 53 of those landowners were interested in returning for additional workshops when offered in the future. Gabe Dillon added that he attended this event and received a lot of positive feedback as well. The Conservation District is happy to be working cooperatively with the Weed District in this capacity.

Matters of the Board

There were no matters of the Board.

Adjourn

Jim Buechle moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:42AM.

Jessica Treweek seconded the motion.

There being no discussion and all in favor – the motion was carried.

Documents Submitted to the Board

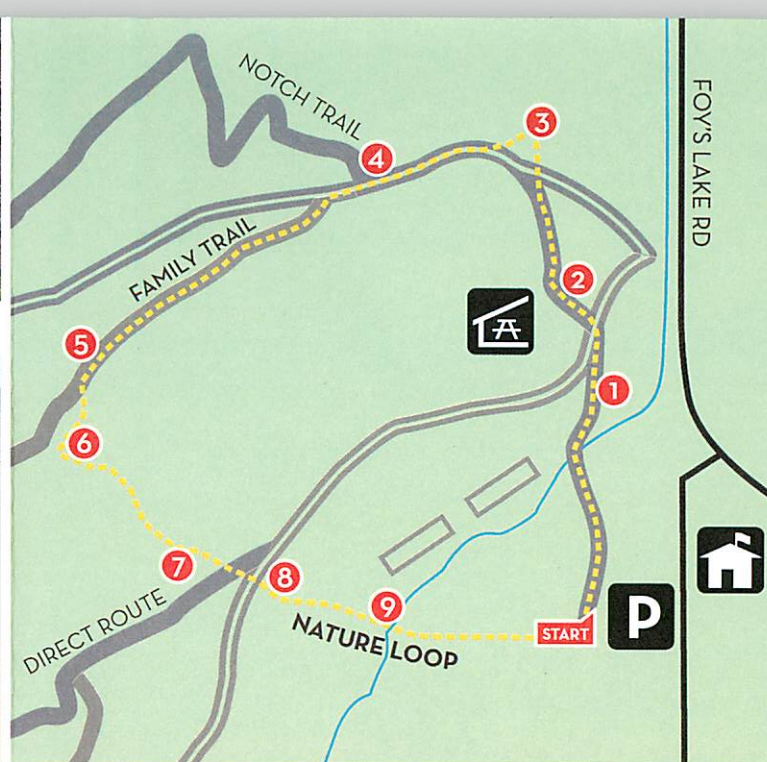
Foy's Community Forest Walking Tour brochure, published by Foy's To Blacktail Trails.

Approved:



Pete Woll, Board President

12/7/19
Date



Learn more about your local forest by reading at the numbered stations. The easy to walk loop is about 1 mile in length. We suggest at least 30 minutes to enjoy this short hike.

This is YOUR forest! To volunteer or to make a donation, contact Foy's to Blacktail Trails.
info@Foy'sToBlacktailTrails.org

Thank you to the many generous donors that have made it possible to acquire this multi-use land for all of us to enjoy.



Foy's Community Forest

Walking Tour



Photo credit: Randy Smith



Society of American Foresters
Growing better all the time

Welcome to **YOUR** community forest!

1 Birch Creek Landscape

We begin in the meadow with no trees, some water, and a lot of grass. As you look up the meadow you see the valley of Birch Creek. The Birch Creek landscape includes the meadow and surrounding forest. You can clearly see the “transition zone” where the trees end and the meadow begins. The transition zone is important to bird and wildlife, as it provides hiding cover, shelter, and a food source. You will often see wildlife in this transition zone.

What causes the change from a forest to a meadow?

2 Changing Landscape

Ah, the shade of the trees! You just walked through the transition zone, from the meadow into the forest.

Why does the transition take place?

The history of this area may give us some clues. In the early 1900s this area was farmed, and the meadow was cleared to grow hay. You can see that the meadow follows the gentle ground which was used for farming. Where the ground becomes steeper and more difficult to farm, trees were left. The trees you are standing in were valued for their shade and their wood, which was used for cabins and fences.

Are there other factors that cause this transition?

Yes, natural factors such as soil, rainfall, sunlight, temperature and elevation also cause changes in the vegetation. So, people and environmental factors have combined to create this Birch Creek Landscape.

3 A Fire Wise Forest

The shade has kept us cool along the trail, but now we are back in the sun. What caused this opening in the forest? Wind? Insects? Logging? Fire?

In this case, people created the opening. This forest is managed by Flathead County Parks with a goal of ensuring residents and visitors have a safe and healthy forest for recreation. The opening allows more sunlight to reach the forest floor. Sunlight plays a dominant role in determining the type of vegetation found on the forest floor and high above you in the trees. You will see different species of trees, grasses and shrubs growing in the sun than in the shade. The Foy's Community Forest Management Plan created a forest that is “fire wise”. As you look around, imagine how a wild fire might spread. Less fuel and “fuel ladders” mean that fire will spread more slowly.

Yes, ladders in the forest! Shrubs and smaller trees that can help a fire spread into the crowns of the larger trees are known as fuel ladders.

4 Notch Trail Junction Harvest Opening

Look around and see if you notice a difference from our last stop. Big conifers still tower above us in the overstory, as well as some hardwoods like aspen. In the understory we see similar grasses, more shrubs, and small trees! A harvest in 1996 created an opening much like what you saw at the last stop. The small trees you see started growing naturally from seed. They could grow thanks to the available sunlight and because each one is adapted to tolerate local soil, weather, and insects.

Do you think the opening at the last stop will always remain an opening as it is today?

Remember, the forest is constantly changing!

5 Time to Thin

Now we see even more small trees!

How much light is able to reach the forest floor under these dense clumps of trees?

What will happen to these trees over time?

Not all of them will survive. There isn't enough water or soil nutrients to support all of them! Thinning is a natural process that takes many, many years. Forest management often mimics nature and thins the trees. Once thinning has occurred, whether by Mother Nature or people, each of the remaining trees will have more room to grow and thrive. Reducing the number of trees will also help slow wildfires.

6 Disease Impacts The Forest

This is a great place to look around at the forest.

Do you notice the large western larch and Douglas fir trees?

They are very different from one another. Western larch loves light, and Douglas fir grows well in light or shade.

What are those big clumps of green in the branches of the Douglas fir?

It's a disease called dwarf mistletoe and it will slowly kill the tree. The disease will spread to all the smaller trees we have looked at along the trail. It even impacts the quality of the wood, making it less desirable to use for lumber.

7 Clues to Changes in the Forest

Look around again. Two western larch are growing together!

How did this happen?

Most likely a squirrel collected cones for the winter and hid them in the ground. With necessary light available, two of the seeds sprouted and now we have “twins”! Look at the branches of the trees, some are VERY big. These buff branches can be caused by genetics, just as tall people often have tall children. It could also be caused by an unlimited amount of sunlight, which helps a tree to grow more rapidly.

8 An Island of Trees

Now we are back in the meadow—but there are trees!

Why are there trees here?

Maybe the farmer left these trees to shade his cows? Local wildlife enjoy this spot. Do you see the browse line on the surrounding hawthorn shrubs?

Do you see the bird nests?

Birds nest in the trees but love to feed in the meadow!

9 Riparian Area

What is a riparian area?

It's a place found along the borders of streams and other water bodies called the “green zone”. It will often stay green throughout the summer. Although this is a small part of our landscape, the wet soils and a high water table provide a valuable service. The riparian area filters and traps sediment, keeping sediment from getting into the stream. Vegetation protects the stream bank from erosion. With care and management we can maintain a riparian area that is healthy and benefits water, wildlife, and people.

We hope you enjoyed your time learning about the changing Birch Creek landscape, and how forest management helps to create a healthy forest ecosystem.